

## **NEW HOPE SERMON | (10 8 20) A PLACE FOR US**

Keith and I have been attending Bruce and Becky's church in the north part of Orlando. It is a 13 year old church plant with lots of young families and a solid base of biblical teaching. In the past years they have met at a middle school in the Lake Baldwin area, but since September as Florida students have returned to the public school system, there has been an Orange County [where Orlando is located] ruling that churches cannot use those school facilities on weekends for their meetings. So Lake Baldwin Presbyterian church is homeless! For right now they are meeting at a Christian school in the general area and that has actually worked well. But this is temporary.

They are officially homeless.

### **They Need A Place.**

So many of our own church members and billions others around the globe are also in very temporary settings and don't know their next location. Refugees are often in fetid camps far from their home towns or even country. Students are caught in the temporariness of academic settings worldwide and don't know when they can return to in-person, on-campus housing and classrooms. There is a general feeling of dislocation and uncertainty. All this begs the deeper existential question – "Where is our place – in history? In physical location? In a new body of Christ? In a future job? Where is my place?"

In our move to Florida Keith has asked several times: Where are we? Are we going back to Wheaton? This week when he asked that, I said, "No, sweetheart. We are not going back to Wheaton. We have no place to go back to." His answer gripped my heart and is the basis for the sermon today. Without hesitation he said with a deep smile on his face, "But we have a future place we are going to." Wow. That's right. I will return to that hope in a little bit.

### **There's A Place For Us**

But first, the longing for a place reminded of a secular song. How many of you have ever heard of or seen the movie or stage production of West Side Story? It was very popular in around 1960 and since then has been the go to choice of countless high school musicals and small theater productions – partly because the story line is still so relevant and the music is really marvelous. It's a contemporary urban take on Romeo and Juliet.

The signature song in that musical is "There's a place for us." It expressed the longing of the two stars in the story – a guy and a gal from rival gangs who had fallen in love. For them to wed and live together would be certain death to one or both of them. So they dreamed of a future where they could be safe and be together always. Here are the song lyrics and the link to the West Side Story musical" Song lyrics and you tube connection. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gIoTnBlh2Q>)

There's a Place for us: Someday, Somewhere, We'll find a new way of living, We'll find a way of forgiving Somewhere. There's a place for us - Somewhere a place for us Peace and quiet and open air wait for us somewhere There's a time for us; Someday there'll be a time for us, Time together with time to spare Time to learn, Time to care Someday, Somewhere We'll find a new way of living; We'll find there's a way of forgiving Somewhere, Somewhere, Somewhere Hold my hand and we're half way there; Hold my hand and I'll take you there Somehow Someday Somewhere.

### **A Place in Heaven**

Can you feel the longing in those words? Somehow. Someday. Somewhere.

That's a common sentiment in today's world racked by Covid-19 where much of the future is upended and people feel lost. The loss of loved ones to this virulent disease just heightens that angst.

This context is why Keith's statement of faith was so remarkable to me this week. Despite the loss of his short-term memory and a substantial portion of his cognitive functioning, he was able to proclaim his faith in the future God has promised for believers. "We have a place in the future we are going to." That faith is based on the sure promise Jesus made to his followers shortly before his death. John 14:1-3

Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God[a] ; believe also in me. 2My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. NIV

The Message puts it this way: 1-3Don't let this throw you. You trust God, don't you? Trust me. There is plenty of room for you in my Father's home. If that weren't so, would I have told you that I'm on my way to get a room ready for you? And if I'm on my way to get your room ready, I'll come back and get you so you can live where I live."

That's Keith's confidence - the confidence and hope that has sustained Christian believers since Christ rose from the dead. How encouraging that nothing can separate us from that truth – even Alzheimers. This week Keith was still able to articulate his hope clearly and fully as he spoke eternal truth.

This week I had the privilege of seeing my sister. We hadn't seen each other in ten years because of various



health issues. Now she is in a memory-care facility in south Florida. It was a great tragedy for me to see her so aged, looking and feeling so old, and confused and unable to follow conversations. Yet, when it finally registered who I am, she began to cry and said, "I never thought I would see you again. I feel like I am in Heaven."

Even now, we don't know if we will see each other again. But we know we will meet in heaven, and that was the bittersweet of it all. We will see each other in heaven and there will be no more crying or suffering or death or physical/mental infirmities. All that will be gone, and we will just be rejoicing together before the Lord, restored to the wholeness God had in mind when he created us. The facility

had social distancing requirements, but at least we could visit together and allowed us to break the rules to stand side by side for this photo! PTL!

Many people in the younger generations today may not have this hope as a sustaining force in their lives. As one Chinese non-believer said, "So what good is eternal life? There's enough turmoil and sadness here in this life." Without a faith in the God who made that promise it is true that the idea of living forever seems like a fairytale at best and a nightmare in its worst-case scenario.

But the key to the hope in Jesus' statement is that He wants all those who love and follow Him to be with Him forever. It's a promise based on a loving relationship with our Lord and Savior and Shepherd. It's a relationship of joy and final transformation as the Apostle John says "When we see Him we will be like him for we will see

Him as He is” (I John 3:2). God is working in this life to conform believers to Christ’s image. When we meet Him after our death, that process will be complete and there will be:

no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away:  
(Rev.21:4). . . . His servants will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever (Rev. 22:3-5).

Christians get to be with Jesus forever and worship Him with those from “every nation, tribe, people and language.” This is the part of the joy of our future place, and a particular blessing for all those who have God’s global heart. We get to be with Jesus and all those we have loved and served together with who are our brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers from many nations. For me it will be an awesome reunion that proves the truth of everything Jesus died for and has sent the Holy Spirit to now accomplish through His church. Think of the global worship! Think of seeing Jesus, who knows your name and has saved you and continues to ever live to make intercession for you (Heb. 7:25). Think of these things – this is the future place God has guaranteed for you.

And this reality is why we want everyone to know Jesus. Alex’s atheistic Chinese graduate student knows only the suffering of this life, but oh, what a difference it is to go from the night of sin and suffering and injustice and evil all around us to the throne room of God’s light and family and incredible love. Christians do have a future place where we will belong and be welcomed and at eternal rest. Hallelujah!

Naturally songs come to mind that continue this theme. The first song is When we all get to heaven. It was one we sang at Belmont Assisted Living Center when I did funerals for residents who had died. A song of hope and faith. Keith was always able to belt that one out!

### **When we all get to heaven**

Refrain: When we all get to heaven what a joy and rejoicing that will be.

When we all see Jesus, we’ll sing and shout the victory!

Sing the wondrous love of Jesus, sing his mercy and his grace; in the mansions bright and glorious  
He’ll prepare for us a place.                      Refrain.

While we walk the pilgrim path clouds will overspread the sky.

But when traveling days are over, not a shadow, not a sigh.                      Refrain.

The other is Soon and very soon. Also a favorite with Belmont residents. The songs give hope for Christians that Jesus will walk with us through the valley of the shadow of death and take us to be with Him on the other side.

### **Soon And Very Soon**

Soon and very soon we are going to see the King. Soon and very soon we are going to see the King.

Soon and very soon we are going to see the King. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! We’re going to see the King.

No more crying there, we are going to see the King. No more crying there, we are going to see the King.

No more crying there, we are going to see the King. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! We’re going to see the King.

Jesus is the One who has secured an eternal place with all His followers in Heaven. Keith knows he is going there. Do you? If you do, we will see you there when Jesus calls us home. Amen and Amen.

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